

The Debate between Buddhapalita, Bhavavevika and Chandrakirti

These three masters each composed a commentary on Nagarjuna's **Fundamental Wisdom**. Their explanations on the first chapter of the **Fundamental Wisdom** which refutes the Samkya view that an effect is produced from a cause that is the same nature/entity as the effect reveals the difference between the Svantrika Madhyamika school which Bhavavevika accepts and the Prasangika Madhyamika school that Buddhapalita and Chandrakirti assert. The debate consists of (a) Buddhapalita's reasoning refuting the Samkya position, (b) Bhavavevika's criticism of Buddhapalita's reasoning and (c) Chandrakirti's defence of Buddhapalita.

Buddhapalita's Reasoning

Buddhapalita says in his commentary on Nagarjuna's **Fundamental Wisdom**:

"There is no production of things from themselves because their production would be senseless and because absurd consequences would follow. A thing that exists in its own entity has no need for production. If it were produced even though it already existed, it would never be not produced."

With these words Buddhapalita sets forth the following two consequences:

- A. Regarding the subject, functioning things, it follows that it would be senseless to produce them again, because they would already exist at the time of their cause.
- B. Regarding the subject, functioning things, it would follow that they are never not produced and so their production is endless, because although they already exist at the time of their cause they have to be produced again.

Bhavavevika's Criticism of Buddhapalita's Reasoning

Bhavavevika analyses Buddhapalita's reasoning in his **Lamp of Wisdom** and finds three faults:

1. Buddhapalita fails to provide (1) a correct reason and (2) an example that are parts of an autonomous syllogism able to refute the view that things are produced from themselves. The reason for his criticism is that Bhavavevika does not find Buddhapalita's consequences adequate and seeks to reconstruct them — based on Buddhapalita's words — in the form of a syllogism which (as claimed by Bhavavevika) could logically only be the following: *Regarding the subject, functioning things, they are not produced from themselves because production is sensible and has an end.* According to Bhavavevika, this syllogism however is not a correct syllogism since it does not provide (1) a reason able to refute the Samkya position nor (2) an example that is an important part of a correct syllogism. Hence Bhavavavika cites the following syllogism that he believes to be free from these faults: *Regarding the subject, the inner sense sources such as an eye sense source, they are not ultimately produced from themselves because they exist. Like, for example, consciousness (which since it exists is not produced from itself either).*
2. Buddhapalita's supposed reasoning is not able to prove to the Samkhyas their mistaken view after the latter have analysed the meaning of the thesis that things are not produced from themselves. A follower of the Samkya school would question what 'production from self' or 'production from its own nature' means. If it were to mean that an effect such as the sprout is produced from a sprout that is manifest at

the time of its cause (the seed), the Samkhyas would agree with Buddhist philosophers that the sprout is not produced from itself. This would mean that Nagarjuna, Buddhapalita, and so on prove something that is already established for a Samkhya (making their reasoning redundant). If it means that the sprout is produced from a sprout that is not manifest at the time of its cause, or that the sprout is produced from a non-manifest nature (Skt: *prakrti*, Tib: *rangbzhin*) that exists at the time of the seed, Buddhapalita's reasoning would prove exactly the opposite for a Samkhya (for a Samkhya would hold that since production is sensible and has an end things are necessarily produced from a non-manifest nature that exists at the time of their cause).

3. Just as the predicate of Buddhapalita's consequence that *production would be senseless and endless* has to be reversed in order to cite the reason of a correct syllogism (*because production is sensible and has an end*) likewise, the reason of the consequence — *things are produced from themselves* — must be reversed to *things are produced from others* to be cited as the predicate of the syllogism. However, this contradicts the Madhyamika tenet that the refutation of the four extreme types of production (production from self, from other, from both and without a cause) is a non-affirming negation. For, if the words *things are produced from themselves* had to be reversed to *things are produced from others*, then these words would affirm that things are produced from others while negating that things are produced from themselves.

Chandrakirti's Defense of Buddhapalita

Chandrakirti defends Buddhapalita's reasoning against Bhavavevika's criticism in his ***Clear Words*** (which is a word-commentary on Nagarjuna's ***Fundamental Wisdom***):

- I. In response to Bhavavevika's first criticism that Buddhapalita does not cite (1) a correct reason and (2) an example as parts of an autonomous syllogism in order to refute the Samkhya position, Chandrakirti argues: an opponent in debate can come to understand that there is no production from self through citing consequences which demonstrate the logical absurdities and inner contradictions that ensue from accepting that things are produced from themselves. With his consequences Buddhapalita therefore shows that it is unreasonable to accept production from self, since the Samkhyas cannot find an example of something that is produced again after it has already been produced, or of something that is produced endlessly after it has already been produced. If however, an opponent persisted in his error despite being presented with these logical absurdities, it would be pointless to state further reasons and examples of autonomous syllogisms. Moreover, there are no autonomous syllogisms because here, *autonomous* is synonymous with *inherently existent* and according to the Prasangika Madhyamika school, inherent existence is not tenable.
- II. In response to Bhavavevika's second criticism that Buddhapalita's reasoning is not able to prove to the Samkhyas their mistaken view after the latter have analysed the meaning of the thesis that things are not produced from themselves, Chandrakirti objects to Bhavavevika's syllogism (*Regarding the subject, the inner sense sources such as an eye sense source, they are not ultimately produced from themselves because they exist. Like, for example, consciousness*), arguing that this syllogism would incur the same fault. Bhavavevika's syllogism would not avoid the fallacy of

proving what is already established for the Samkhyas if a thing's non-production from itself were to refer to non-production from itself that is manifest at the time of its cause. If, on the other hand, a thing's non-production refers to its non-production from itself that is non-manifest or from a non-manifest nature that exists at the time of its cause, the reason of Bhavavevika's syllogism would have the fallacy of proving for a Samkhya exactly the opposite of non-production from self.

- III. Regarding Bhavavevika's third criticism that since it is necessary for Buddhapalita to assert the opposite of the predicate and reason of his consequences, Buddhapalita contradicts the Madhyamika tenet that the refutation of the four extreme types of production is a non-affirming negation, Chandrakirti argues: although consequences sometimes imply their opposite meaning, this is not true for all consequences. When a consequence implies its opposite meaning, it implies a correct syllogism with (1) the opposite of the reason of the consequence being cited as the predicate of the syllogism and (2) the opposite of the predicate of the consequence being cited as the reason of the syllogism. However, Buddhapalita did not state his two consequences to imply their opposite meaning since the opposite of the predicate of the two consequences (i.e., that things being produced again is sensible and that things being produced again is not endless) are not in accordance with reality and are only asserted by the Samkhyas.